

## Clinical pharmacy and pharmaceutical care – is there a difference?



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**C**linical Pharmacy (CP) and Pharmaceutical Care (PhC) are two concepts which were developed in USA in the 1960s and 1980s respectively. Both concepts have been used to describe activities which are more or less in accordance with how they were originally defined.

Today there is considerable confusion both in practice and research settings regarding what kind of activities each concept encompasses. The concepts are also often used interchangeably.

Are there any important differences between CP and PhC? Answer: 'no' and 'yes'. Both concepts represent a paradigm shift from a product-centred to a patient-centred philosophy of practice. Although the definitions of CP and PhC differ they share the vision that medicines should address patient needs. This represents a turnaround of thinking that still constitutes a major challenge to the profession.

Why was PhC 'invented'? In the 1980s clinical pharmacy in the US was well established within the institutional setting, while it held a less prominent place within community pharmacy. Pharmaceutical care was therefore partly constructed as a way to develop the clinical role of the community pharmacist [8]. Hence, the concept has in some countries been regarded as clinical pharmacy for the community setting. This is no longer correct, see the definitions of Pharmaceutical Care.

Nevertheless, clinical pharmacy when broadly defined, does not necessarily imply a personal relationship between the patient and the pharmacist, see the ESCP definition. However, the personal relationship is always present in any definition of pharmaceutical care. Seen in this perspective pharmaceutical care might be regarded as the part of clinical pharmacy that is practiced in personal relationship with patients in any health-care setting.

Another way of putting it is to state that clinical pharmacy is what pharmacists contribute to patient care, while pharmaceutical care is what patients experience first hand [9]. In conclusion, although it is inconvenient to have to cope with two related concepts I think both will stay around. To avoid too much confusion I suggest some guiding principles:

- Define the concepts in accordance with the setting they are to be used in.
- When appropriate, tell what you mean by clinical pharmacy and pharmaceutical care.
- When reading studies, find out how the authors have defined the concepts.
- When doing research you should describe the content of the concept chosen.

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### References

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Table 1: Definitions and descriptions of clinical pharmacy and pharmaceutical care

Organisation, country, author	Definition and/or description
<b>CLINICAL PHARMACY (CP)</b>	
European Society of Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP) [1]	Clinical pharmacy is a health specialty, which describes the activities and services of the clinical pharmacist to develop and promote the rational and appropriate use of medicinal products and devices.
Norwegian Association of Hospital Pharmacists 2007, Norway	Clinical pharmacy implies the use of pharmaceutical knowledge and experience, clinical data and any other relevant information in order to contribute to the appropriate use of medicines by the individual patient. The work is to be done by a pharmacist in collaboration with the doctor, the nurse and the patient.
Franklin BD, van Mil. JWF 2005 [2]	Clinical pharmacy is that part of the practice of pharmacy that contributes directly to patient care and develops and promotes the rational and appropriate use of medicinal products and devices.
UK Clinical Pharmacy Association 1996 [3]	The term clinical pharmacy no longer implies any degree of exclusivity UK but has come to be used generally to describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by a pharmacist to contribute to patient care.
Frontini R. 2009 [4], Germany	Clinical pharmacy is understood as pharmaceutical services provided at ward level.
American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) [5]	<i>Abridged version:</i> The area of pharmacy concerned with the science and practice of rational medication use.
<b>PHARMACEUTICAL CARE (PhC)</b>	
Heppler CD, Strand LM. 1990 [6]	Pharmaceutical care is the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes that improve a patient's quality of life.
Heppler CD. 2004 [7]	Pharmaceutical care describes the original purpose of clinical pharmacy, when it was understood as an approach to professional practice.
Franklin BD, van Mil. JWF 2005 [2]	Pharmaceutical care is the person-focused care relating to medication, which is provided by a pharmacist and the pharmacy team with the aim of improving the outcomes of therapy.

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